

# OKLAHOMA SCHOOL SAFETY PROTOCOLS



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On March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a National Emergency in response to a novel coronavirus (“COVID-19”) pandemic. Two days later, the Governor of the State of Oklahoma, Kevin Stitt, also declared a State of Emergency. Both declarations remain in effect today, and COVID-19 continues to impact our state and its citizens.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) emphasizes that the COVID-19 risk to individuals is dependent on exposure, and transmission is primarily through respiratory droplets produced from an individual’s mouth or nose. In a *Journal of the American Medical Association* review of the latest science, the CDC found that wearing masks is a “critical tool” in reducing spread of the virus by obstructing transmission of respiratory droplets. These findings mirror those in other nations that conclude face masks significantly reduce the daily growth rate of reported infections. In addition, there is mounting evidence that masks provide a measure of protection for the individual wearing the mask, as they can decrease the amount of viral particles – or viral load – inhaled by that individual.

On July 18, 2020, the 25,000<sup>th</sup> case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the State of Oklahoma. With the transmission of COVID-19 and related hospitalizations continuing at elevated levels, and public schools set to return for the 2020-21 school year, provisions for the safety of the life, health and welfare of Oklahoma schoolchildren and their families, and those who work in Oklahoma public schools, are necessary.

In light of the foregoing, pursuant to the powers, authority and duties vested in the Oklahoma State Board of Education (“State Board”), it is appropriate and in the best interests of the health, safety and welfare of all members of the school community for the State Board to adopt this Emergency COVID-19 School Safety Response and Order, effective immediately through September 30, 2020, as follows below.

1. Oklahoma public schools shall conduct all school activities consistent with and informed by applicable health orders, protocols and guidelines. These include the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President’s Plan for Opening Up American Again guidelines, school decision guidance from the CDC, Governor Stitt’s Executive Orders and Open Up and Recover Safely (OURS) Plan, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) Return to Learn Oklahoma framework and COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions, as each is updated periodically. Additionally, the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) has developed the Oklahoma COVID-19 Alert System, a multitiered risk measurement tool with corresponding color categories that identify the current COVID-19 risk level on a county-by-county basis.



2. These designations, as modified below for purposes of school operations and which, at a minimum, all public schools shall conduct activities in accordance with, will be **updated weekly** each Friday based on updates to the [Oklahoma COVID-19 Alert System](#). Depending on public health conditions, additional actions, orders or guidance provided by OSDE or OSDH may be necessary as a county’s designation changes. Some counties may not experience a straight path from a red designation to a yellow and then a green designation. Instead, cycling back and forth among designations may occur as public health indicators improve or worsen. Each school should account for changing conditions and include those scenarios in their local plans.
3. Finally, this School Safety Response document must not be interpreted as a substitute for close consultation with local, regional and state health agencies and experts. Scientific understanding of the novel coronavirus is increasing rapidly, so efforts to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 will necessarily evolve with additional research and experience. Moreover, circumstances will vary from school to school and district to district, regardless of county alert level. The OSDE and educators across Oklahoma must remain vigilant, monitor data and stay in close communication with public health experts. The information below provides minimum requirements to be applied across the state. Local boards of education may impose stricter requirements.

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## **GREEN LEVEL** (Fewer than 1.43 cases per 100,000)

**Instruction:** Schools are expected to offer in-person, on-site instruction in accordance with their reopening plans and may begin the 2020-21 school year as determined by local boards of education.

**Health Protocol:** Follow all applicable health orders and required protocols, and adhere to district policies relating to:

- Screenings of staff, students and visitors prior to entry
- Policies for social distancing and gatherings on and off campus
- Additional mitigation techniques, including hygiene practices, proper ventilation and school cleaning practices

**Masks:**

- Masks are **strongly recommended** for all staff and students. Teachers of students in PreK-3rd grade should consider protective face shields or clear-paneled masks.
- *See Mask Exemptions and Accommodations.*

**Special Education Classrooms:** Teachers and staff in special education classrooms are **strongly recommended** to wear protective face shields and/or masks when social distancing cannot be practiced or students are without masks. In addition, gloves and gowns are **recommended** for special education staff when providing services for medically vulnerable students.

**Visitors and Service Providers:** It is **recommended** that school visitations be restricted and that any visitors allowed on premises wear masks at all times. Temperature checks and symptom checks should be required for all visitors. In cases where schools and districts have partnerships with community organizations, health care providers and local government agencies that provide additional educational and wraparound services to students, staff of such partners should be allowed into buildings following the same procedures as for school personnel.

**Extracurricular Activities and Group Assemblies:** Schools should remain vigilant and plan with caution. Group gatherings, assemblies and spectators at indoor and outdoor events without PPE or social distancing can accelerate community transmission and a loss of **GREEN LEVEL** status.

## **YELLOW LEVEL** (More than 1.43 but fewer than 14.39 cases per 100,000)

**Instruction:** Schools are expected to offer in-person, on-site instruction in accordance with their re-opening plans and may begin the 2020-21 school year as determined by local boards of education.

**Health Protocol:** Follow all applicable health orders and required protocols, and adhere to district policies relating to:

- Screenings of staff, students and visitors prior to entry
- Policies for social distancing and gatherings on and off campus
- Additional mitigation techniques, including hygiene practices, proper ventilation and school cleaning practices

### **Masks:**

- Masks are **required** for all staff and students in grades 4-12, with exemptions for adults and children who are physically unable to wear them.
- Masks are **required** for students in grades PreK-3 in hallways, common areas and during times of school transportation. Masks may be removed while inside classrooms **if** classroom cohorts remain grouped together throughout the day. During such time, teachers are still **required** to wear protective face shields and/or masks (clear-paneled masks preferred). Teachers may wish to wear both a face shield and a mask to provide an additional safeguard layer when students are not wearing masks.
- Exceptions are allowed for the following: when eating meals, naptime, recess and during physical education if social distancing is possible.
- Adults are **required** to wear masks around other adults.
- *See Mask Exemptions and Accommodations.*

**Special Education Classrooms:** Teachers and staff in special education classrooms are **required** to wear protective face shields and/or masks when social distancing cannot be practiced or students are without masks. In addition, gloves and gowns are **recommended** for special education staff when providing services for medically vulnerable students.

**Visitors and Service Providers:** It is **required** that school visitations be restricted and that any visitors allowed on premises wear masks at all times. Temperature checks and symptom checks should be required for all visitors. In cases where schools and districts have partnerships with community organizations, health care providers and local government agencies that provide additional educational and wraparound services to students, staff of such partners should be allowed into buildings following the same procedures as for school personnel.

**Extracurricular Activities and Group Assemblies:** It is **recommended** that schools limit gatherings, assemblies and spectators at indoor and outdoor events to decrease community transmission.

## ORANGE LEVEL 1 (More than 14.39 but fewer than 25 cases per 100,000)

**Instruction:** Districts are strongly recommended to transition to alternative schedules (A/B weeks, rotations, hybrid model, etc.) or distance learning in consultation with local and state health officials and OSDE to reduce the number of individuals in school buildings and ensure greater social distancing. Students with disabilities who are unable to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) solely through a distance learning environment (as determined by the IEP team) and those students who are unable to receive instructional services through distance learning may receive certain services at a school site that is closed or at an alternate school site or other location. Teachers and staff may be on campus as assigned.

**Health Protocol:** Follow all applicable health orders and required protocols, and adhere to district policies relating to:

- Screenings of staff, students and visitors prior to entry
- Policies for social distancing and gatherings
- Additional mitigation techniques, including hygiene practices, proper ventilation and school cleaning practices

**Masks:**

- Masks are **required** for all staff and students in grades PreK-12, with exemptions for adults and children who are physically unable to wear them. Teachers of PreK-3 grade students should consider protective face shields or clear-paneled masks.
- Exceptions are allowed for the following: when eating meals, naptime, recess and during physical education, if social distancing is possible.
- Adults are **required** to wear masks around other adults.
- See Mask Exemptions and Accommodations.

**Special Education Classrooms:** Teachers and staff in special education classrooms are **required** to wear protective face shields and/or masks when social distancing cannot be practiced or students are without masks. In addition, gloves and gowns are **recommended** for special education staff when providing services for medically vulnerable students.

**Visitors and Service Providers:** It is **required** that school visitations be restricted and that any visitors allowed on premises wear masks at all times. Temperature checks and symptom checks should be required for all visitors. In cases where schools and districts have partnerships with community organizations, health care providers and local government agencies that provide additional educational and wraparound services to students, staff of such partners should be allowed into buildings following the same procedures as for school personnel.

**Child Nutrition:** Provisions for school meal programs should continue.

**Extracurricular Activities and Group Assemblies:** Buildings and campuses **may not** be used for extracurricular activities, including spectator sports, where social distancing guidelines are not possible or for other group activities such as assemblies and performances. It is **strongly recommended** that buildings and campuses not be utilized for public events and gatherings.

## ORANGE LEVEL 2 (More than 25 but fewer than 50 cases per 100,000)

**Instruction:** Districts must transition to distance learning until community transmission declines to **YELLOW LEVEL** on the COVID-19 Alert System or as advised by local and state health officials and OSDE. Students with disabilities who are unable to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) solely through a distance learning environment (as determined by the IEP team) and those students who are unable to receive instructional services through distance learning, not to exceed **twenty-five percent (25%)** of students enrolled at a site, may receive certain services at a school site that is closed or at an alternate school site or other location. Teachers and staff may be on campus as assigned.

**Health Protocol:** Follow all applicable health orders and required protocols, and adhere to district policies relating to:

- Screenings of staff, students and visitors prior to entry
- Policies for social distancing and gatherings
- Additional mitigation techniques, to include hygiene practices, proper ventilation and school cleaning practices

**Masks:**

- Masks are **required** for all staff and students in grades PreK-12, with exemptions for adults and children who are physically unable to wear them. Teachers of students in PreK-3rd grade should consider protective face shields or clear-paneled masks.
- Exceptions are allowed for the following: when eating meals, naptime and recess.
- Adults are **required** to wear masks around other adults.
- *See Mask Exemptions and Accommodations.*

**Special Education Classrooms:** Teachers and staff in special education classrooms are **required** to wear protective face shields and/or masks when social distancing cannot be practiced or students are without masks. In addition, gloves and gowns are **recommended** for special education staff when providing services for medically vulnerable students.

**Visitors and Service Providers:** It is **required** that school visitations be restricted and that any visitors allowed on premises wear masks at all times. Temperature checks and symptom checks should be required for all visitors. In cases where schools and districts have partnerships with community organizations, health care providers and local government agencies that provide additional educational and wraparound services to students, staff of such partners should be allowed into buildings following the same procedures as for school personnel.

**Child Nutrition:** Provisions for school meal programs should continue.

**Extracurricular Activities and Group Assemblies:** Buildings and campuses **may not** be used for extracurricular activities, including spectator sports, or other group activities such as assemblies and performances. Buildings and campuses **may not** be utilized for public events and gatherings.

## **RED LEVEL** (50 or more cases per 100,000)

**Instruction:** Districts are **required** to close buildings and provide distance learning until community transmission declines to **ORANGE LEVEL 1** on the COVID-19 Alert System or as advised by local and state health officials and OSDE. Students with disabilities who are unable to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) solely through a distance learning environment (as determined by the IEP team) and those students who are unable to receive instructional services through distance learning, not to exceed **fifteen percent (15%)** of students enrolled at a site, may receive certain services at a school site that is closed or at an alternate school site or other location. Teachers and staff may be on campus as assigned.

**Health Protocol:** Follow all applicable health orders, protocols and guidelines, including those relating to:

- Screenings of staff, students and visitors prior to entry
- Policies for social distancing and gatherings
- Additional mitigation techniques, to include hygiene practices, proper ventilation and school cleaning practices

**Masks:**

- Masks are **required** for all staff and students with exemptions for adults and children who are physically unable to wear them. Exceptions are allowed for meals.
- Adults are **required** to wear masks around other adults.
- See Mask Exemptions and Accommodations.

**Special Education Classrooms:** Teachers and staff in special education classrooms are **required** to wear protective face shields and/or masks when social distancing cannot be practiced or students are without masks. In addition, gloves and gowns are **recommended** for special education staff when providing services for medically vulnerable students.

**Visitors and Service Providers:** It is **required** that school visitations be restricted and that any visitors allowed on premises wear masks at all times. Temperature checks and symptom checks should be required for all visitors. In cases where schools and districts have partnerships with community organizations, health care providers and local government agencies that provide additional educational and wraparound services to students, staff of such partners should be allowed into buildings following the same procedures as for school personnel.

**Child Nutrition:** Provisions for school meal programs should continue.

**Extracurricular Activities and Group Assemblies:** Buildings and campuses **may not** be used for extracurricular activities, including spectator sports, or other group activities such as assemblies and performances. Buildings and campuses **may not** be utilized for public events and gatherings.



## MASK EXEMPTIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

- Persons who work or directly interact with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, and who rely on lip-reading to communicate, may remove a face covering for the duration of time as is necessary to communicate or interact directly with the individual(s). In this situation, consideration should be given to using a clear face covering. If a clear face covering is unavailable, staff members should consider using written communication, closed captioning or decrease background noise to make communication possible while wearing a cloth face covering that blocks the lips.
- Persons with a medical condition or disability that prevents wearing a face covering must wear a face shield.
- Persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines. This includes people who work in a setting where cloth face coverings may increase the risk of heat-related illness or cause safety concerns due to introduction of a hazard (for instance, straps getting caught in machinery) may consult with an occupational safety and health professional to determine the appropriate face covering for their setting.
- Persons who are obtaining a service involving the nose or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service.
- Note: Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others should wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.



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OKLAHOMA SCHOOL SAFETY PROTOCOLS		GREEN LEVEL	YELLOW LEVEL	ORANGE LEVEL 1	ORANGE LEVEL 2	RED LEVEL
<b>Instruction</b>	In-person instruction expected	X	X			
	Alternative schedules or distance learning strongly recommended			X		
	Distance learning required				X	X
<b>Health Protocols</b>	Masks strongly recommended for all teachers, staff, students	X				
	Masks required for teachers/staff		X	X	X	X
	Masks required for all students		X	X	X	X
	PreK-3 grade students may remove masks in class		X			
	Visitors Restricted		X	X	X	X
	Follow all health orders and protocols, and adhere to district policies (screenings, distancing, handwashing)	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Activities</b>	Buildings and campuses strongly recommended to limit public events		X			
	Buildings and campuses not available for activities where social distancing not possible			X		
	Buildings and campuses not available for public use or extracurricular activities				X	X